

**SPECIAL MEETING
BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN**

March 14, 2006

6:00 PM

Mayor Guinta called the meeting to order.

Mayor Guinta called for the Pledge of Allegiance, this function being led by Alderman DeVries.

A moment of silent prayer was observed.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Alderman Roy, Gatsas, Long, Duval, Pinard, O'Neil, Lopez,
Shea, DeVries, Garrity, Smith, Forest

Absent: Alderman Osborne, Thibault

Mayor Guinta advised that the purpose of the special meeting is a presentation of preliminary findings consisting of a Comprehensive Operations Analysis (COA) of the Manchester Transit Authority's existing fixed-route bus services. We have David Smith here and additional presenters from KKO & Associates and the Southern NH Planning Commission as well. David, I will turn it over to you for more formal introductions.

David Smith, MTA Director, stated I would like to introduce Geoff Slater to my immediate left. Geoff is a consultant with Edwards & Kelcey formerly with KKO who merged with Edwards & Kelcey just recently. Also Tim White with the Southern NH Planning Commission and Tim is going to open with a few remarks.

Tim White, AICP, Senior Transportation Planner, Southern NH Planning Commission stated on behalf of the Southern NH Planning Commission I would like to thank Mayor Guinta and the Board of Aldermen for allowing us to speak to you this evening. I will take a brief moment to frame the MTA Comprehensive Operations Analysis in the larger context of our Regional Transit Feasibility Study. We met with the Board of Aldermen last fall to present the scope for our Regional Transit Feasibility Study and at that time we explained to them why we are doing the study and the issues that we are trying to address. In our region as well as nationwide we are seeing a pattern of disperse development occurring at the fringes of our urban areas. This is resulting in increased regional trip making and increased travel across municipal boundaries. The overwhelming majority of this travel takes place in private automobiles and this pattern creates issues for those segments of our population who don't have full access to this mode of travel. In order for this region to continue to compete economically with other areas and to maintain the quality of life for those who live and work here, we need to develop innovative solutions to insure the mobility of these groups. The real focus of our study is to look at the feasibility of expanding public transportation on a more regional scale as a means to accomplish this goal and the Comprehensive Operations Analysis is the first step in meeting the goals of our Regional Transit Feasibility Study. We felt that it was important to take the steps necessary to make sure that the existing fixed route bus service is operating as efficiently as possible and we wanted to accomplish this before we got too far into the process of identifying ways to expand it on a regional scale. The Comprehensive Operations Analysis has been ongoing since last fall. We have been making significant progress and we now find ourselves at the point where we would like to begin to get feedback from the various stakeholders on what we have accomplished so far. At this point I think I would like to turn the presentation back over to David Smith who is going to provide a little bit more information on what the Comprehensive Operations Analysis consists of. Thank you very much.

Mr. Smith stated in advance of my comments I will apologize in advance. I am recovering from a 10-day virus and don't have much voice so I will try to be very brief. The MTA staff and commissioners have sought to do a COA or a Comprehensive Operations Analysis for some time. A COA is one term for basically what is a route and schedule study. The last service revisions of routes and schedules occurred in 1999 and prior to that in 1994. These revisions were in response to limitations in funding and the need to trim the fixed route service to remain financially viable. As a result of these service revisions, the number of routes, frequency of service and span of service or the length were diminished. Some routes were combined creating some large loops and while there is preserved neighborhood coverage throughout the City, that created indirect service and some long trips for many passengers. The round trip running times of routes, that is the time from leaving downtown to the end of the line and back, have not been studied and adjusted in several years and meanwhile economic activity and traffic patterns as you know have changed causing on our routes, on some of our routes, our Front Street route for example, a problem. In addition the round trip running times of many routes differ and they range from 35 minutes to an hour round trip. The routes are interlined in round robin fashion to be most efficient. That is one driver may drive six different routes in a row in order to be most efficient. Few routes were given any recovery time in this sequence and as a consequence when one route fails to perform on schedule it affects the whole schedule because the whole City schedule is interlined. An example of that would be the construction delays encountered on Candia Road last fall, which affected more than just the routes serving Candia Road because of the several routes following that. The drivers basically could not catch up. To a lesser extent we encountered the same effect during the Christmas shopping season with our South Willow group. While it is very efficient in keeping the buses moving, the round robin interlines have prevented running time adjustment or meaningful route

changes in the short term because all of the routes are tied together and to break them apart means the whole system really needs to be studied. That is why we sought to do the Comprehensive Operations Analysis. I believe the efforts to streamline the system in the last service revisions resulted in a complex system that limits our attractiveness to new users and makes it very difficult to understand. In addition for our regular riders it results in indirect and sometimes inconvenient service and discourages patrons. I think as Manchester grows in size and economic vitality we need to find ways to make public transit viable again and we need to provide a transportation option that is attractive and easy to understand. We applied directly to the state DOT for federal transit planning funds in 2004 to conduct such an analysis and were denied that application because MTA is not eligible directly for federal transit planning funds. We worked with the Southern NH Planning Commission and are very grateful that last year they agreed to fund this as part of their overall Regional Transit Plan. I want to describe briefly what a COA is and then let Geoff give you some of the details. A COA is a thorough street level review of the productivity and effectiveness of a transit service. It is combined also with patron surveys and public input from many members of the public who measured customer satisfaction and unmet needs. There are several typical elements. One of the most important is a route by route and trip by trip count of passengers boarding and alighting at every bus stop in the system over a short period of time. What this enables us to do is actually look at the system as a snapshot in a short period of time that shows what our ridership patterns are – where are ridership is very strong, where it is light and where it can be improved. A cross tabulation of transfers between routes is part of a COA typically and that enables us to determine what route combinations we should look at that make it so that a passenger ultimately may not need to change buses but stay on the same bus and go to their destination without having to transfer. Where a transfer might be necessary, a transfer analysis will tell us which routes need to be timed so that they meet at the same time. Finally, on board customer surveys are used to better

understand the reasons for current trip making, to solicit passenger input regarding service attributes that they like and attributes they don't like and the desires they may have for improvements that need to be considered. Finally, the COA is not really simply a static plan for the current service and the existing service area. It needs to be focused on the future and how the service might be incrementally expanded to serve the growing area. So input is required from community leaders and planning professionals regarding community growth, especially in areas that are underserved or areas that are not currently served by transit. Any plans made to improve current services must be future oriented and that is one of the reasons for the meeting tonight. Members of the Planning Commission, members of the community and members of social service agencies that we work with have all been invited tonight. The staff and Board of Commissioners are pleased to have the Southern NH Planning Commission as a partner in this important first step towards improving transit.

Geoff Slater, Senior Consultant, Edwards & Kelcey stated I am also recovering from the same flu. Hopefully my voice will hold out. I have a Powerpoint presentation for you. David and Tim have given you a lot of background on the study so I will give a little bit more but not too much. Just so it is clear why we are all here and Tim has already said this but the overarching purpose of this study is to insure that the MTA provides services as effectively as possible. Some of the issues we are dealing with as we have done this study is that the Manchester area is growing very rapidly and most of the growth is occurring outwards. While this has happened, changes have been made to MTA services over the years but most of those changes have been lost in funding constraints and they have consisted of service reductions. There are a number of ways to make service reductions and the choices that have been made here have really been to try to maintain service coverage to have buses still covering almost all of the area. That has been done pretty effectively but it has all been done at the expense of passenger convenience

so what has happened is really the region has changed and MTA services have changed but kind of in opposite directions. So riders with other options have left the system and ridership has declined and that decline has been going on for quite awhile. What we are trying to do in this study is really to make service more responsible to the City's needs and the region's needs and reverse the ridership declines that have been occurring since the late 80's and attract new riders. As we will talk about tonight we think there are quite a few ways that can be done.

Really briefly this is our work scope. As David has already mentioned we have done a lot of data collection to find out exactly who is riding the system, where they are coming from, where they are going to what their opinions are on service and that sort of thing. We are now about 2/3 of the way through the study. We have completed an evaluation of the existing services and that is what I am going to be presenting tonight. As part of that there will be some general ideas about how to change service. The next step will be to develop those in detail, analyze them, figure out which ones we think are best and make recommendations. The reason we are here tonight is to present the evaluation of the existing services that we have done, present some of the potential improvement options to all of you to get your comments and make sure that you think we are on the right track. With that what I will start with is a real quick overview of existing MTA services.

There are 13 routes in all. All of them operate to and from downtown Manchester. The graphic on the right is a bit busy but you can see that really everything comes in and out of downtown. The ridership counts we did in October and November showed 1,900 passengers per weekday, which is a higher number than we have been coming up with...that MTA has been coming up with recently. The highest ridership in the system is to and from downtown and basically the shopping centers – the Mall of NH and the shopping centers along South River Road. The lowest ridership is to the West of the river out to St. Anselm's College. What I am going to do is I have a bunch of slides on route by route changes, probably too many and I will try not to go into those too much but I will start with some system

wide issues. These are things that apply to really almost every route in the system. As we looked at each route and when we develop improvement options this is a general set of things that we will want to do for almost every route in the system. In general what we found is and David touched on this quite a bit in his remarks is that MTA service has become very circuitous, complex and inconvenient and that has happened as the service cuts have been made to try to maintain service coverage. So if you want get here on a certain trip...it is trying to make sure there is a little bit of service to everybody and what has happened is that although there is a little bit of service to everybody there is not really, really good service to anybody. So to reverse that and provide better service the things we think that MTA should focus on is first and foremost to develop a single downtown Manchester hub and I will talk about that a little more in a minute but that is probably the most important thing. Second is you will see when I talk about the routes that the service is very circuitous. We want to make the service more direct. We are doing some work in Burlington, VT also and one of the planners said that every time they straighten a route their ridership goes up and I think that would be the case here. So if we can make things more direct we can attract more people to service. We want to make service simpler. There are many different deviations, single route and different trips will do different things at different times of the day and you often have to do something very different to get home than you did to get to where you went to in the first place. So we want to make service simpler and minimize those route deviations. We want to adjust spans of service to better match current market conditions. The economy has really transitioned. You hear a lot of it is based on retail and those jobs all go until about 10 PM. Service shuts down about 7 PM or a little before. There are some new types of service like the flex-route service, which is kind of like an airport shuttle van service where it is scheduled on one end but will pick you up on the other end and in certain areas here we think that would work. We think that as the retail establishments grow further in order to serve the residents of Manchester we need

to serve those areas. So by doing these things we think that it will be possible to significantly improve service. As I said probably the most important thing that can be done is develop a downtown terminal. Right now all MTA routes operate in and out of two different terminals. One is almost across the street at Veteran's Park and the other one is a little bit to the north at Elm and Wall Streets. The way the buses operate now, routes leave from one terminal and come back to another. That is a very confusing situation for riders and it makes transfers between routes difficult. So probably the most important thing we can do is get a single location where we can have a single terminal and have all of the buses running in and out of there to make things easier for passengers to understand and a lot easier to make connections. My understanding is that you are considering Veteran's Park, which would be a great location. I guess my message to you would be that is a great location. Any location that is convenient to downtown we can make work but what we would really like is a single location. With that I will run through a few slides on each of the different routes. There are 13 routes in all if you want to count down. The first route is Route 1 to the Airport. This is the MTA route that has the least amount of service. It only operates during peak periods. There are two trips in the morning and two trips in the afternoon. As I said things are overly complicated. Although there are only a few trips, half of them operate clockwise around the airport and the other half operate counter-clockwise. It makes it confusing. Ridership on this route is very low. Only 33 passengers a day and all of the ridership is between downtown and the airport area and some of that ridership between downtown is transfers from other routes but everyone on this route is getting on downtown. There is no ridership to the intermediate points even though it does go down to the Mall of NH, which is the biggest ridership area in the system. So some of the issues with this route. I think first there is a mismatch between Route 1's schedule and the demand. The schedule is oriented towards traditional basically 8 AM or 9 AM to 5 PM work hours and the jobs at the airport really don't operate that way. The airport starts operation very early

and it goes to very late. Fortunately last weekend I found out there are still people there at 3 AM when my flight came in. MTA can operate those services hours but the services operated should be more oriented towards when the jobs do actually start and end. The limited service nature of the route is too inconvenient so if we are going to continue to serve the airport it should be done with more service and the operation of service in different directions is confusing. So potential improvements in this route are really to revise the schedules to better match the shift times, operate all the service along the same alignment and you will hear me say that a lot about a lot of routes tonight. It may be that we can provide connecting service to and from the Mall of NH, which is almost a secondary home to the system and that would provide connections to nearby routes. We could convert this to a flex-route service and this is where the route would be scheduled to get or from the airport at certain times but we could designate a service area and pick people up at the curb in front of their house or place of business to get them there just like other airport shuttle services work. I will talk about Route 3. That is another route that serves the airport and it also doesn't do very well. One way we can get some efficiencies would be to consolidate those two routes into one and that would provide some resources to do other things elsewhere in the system. The second route, Route 2 is Lake Avenue and Hanover Street. It operates between downtown and the Massabesic circle. Most of the peak period outbound trips operate via East Industrial Drive, which is under that little jet handle down to the bottom of the map. This route carries an average ridership of about 153 people per day and the ridership is spread fairly evenly along the route. What you will see on most of these is that there are two maps. In this case the top one, although the lines are the same thickness the bottom one the different thicknesses of the line show where the ridership is along the route. So if the line is thicker that means that is where the ridership is highest. If the line is thinner that is where ridership is lower. On this one because the ridership is spread pretty well along the route it looks kind of the same. Also on the ones coming up you will see some pretty big

differences. If you are wondering why there are two that is why. So the overall assessment on this route is that it performs fairly well but again service is circuitous especially for going to the Industrial Park. The service only operates in one direction to the Industrial Park so if you take a trip...if you go to work in the Industrial Park in the morning and you want to go home you have to go all the way out to Massabesic circle and then come back in, which I don't think anyone wants to do. The Industrial Park deviation also adds some extra time to the route that causes reliability problems. There is not really enough time on the route to do that. So what we are looking to do on that route is make the service more direct, operating inbound and outbound via the same alignment so that you don't have to go all the way to the end of the line and come back in and it may be possible to provide service to the Industrial Park via an extension of Route 4 instead of doing it with Route 2 and that could make service more direct and more convenient.

Route 3 is the second route that operates to and from the airport. It also operates between downtown and the airport. This route is an all day route. Ridership is still low on this. The two routes that are going to the airport aren't really doing that well. It only has 73 passengers per weekday and 22 per Saturday. Most of the trips on this route carry three or fewer passengers and as with Route 1 nearly all of the ridership is between downtown and the airport. We are not picking up any intermediary riders on this route. So again as with Route 1 the schedule doesn't appear to meet demand. The service starts too late and ends too early. Potential improvements are, as with Route 1 to reschedule the service based on airport shift times, provide timed transfers at the airport terminal to connections to the airport area businesses and these serve that big loop that Route 1 is now serving as I already said if we could consolidate Routes 1 and 3. Saturday service just doesn't seem to be justified based on the low riderships. Again there are some cases where we are recommending that some services be discontinued or cut back and that is one way to provide resources for some of the places where we would like to expand service. Route 4 is Page Street/Elliott Hospital. This operates to the

East of downtown. On weekdays this service operates to and from the East Side Plaza. On Saturdays, the service goes all the way out to Massabesic Circle and that is providing the same service that Route 2 provides on weekdays but Route 2 does not operate on Saturdays so MTA is trying to serve that area with this route on Saturdays. If you look at the downtown end of the route, you will see that there are two different alignments so inbound service and outbound service are operating along different alignments, especially in the outbound direction where it jogs all over the place and the service is very circuitous. The ridership is slightly below the system average. Here on the bottom map where the line thicknesses represent where ridership is higher or lower you can see that the ridership is pretty heavily focused in the downtown area and that really reflects that people are riding to or from downtown and most of the people on the route are again on or off in that area and the other spots are pretty well spread along the area. Elliot Hospital and East Side Plaza are two of the bigger stops on the route. So the assessment on this is that the inbound and outbound alignments are very inconvenient and confusing. If you travel out of bounds you get off at one stop and as you get back on you have to find another stop that could be blocks away from where you got off. That is inconvenient and it is confusing. Saturday alignments are also confusing. This route driver winds around to do a bunch of different things but the ridership on the route deviations is very low so we are not gaining a lot by doing that. So to improve this route we really think it should be simplified. Make it much more direct and operate service along the same alignment in both directions. Eliminate the low ridership with deviations. Just operate straight back and forth rather than making those deviations. Eliminate the Candia Road deviation, which is a pretty big one and make service more direct. If we did that, we could operate straight through to East Side Plaza and then extend service beyond East Side Plaza into East Industrial Park Drive and replace that funny type service. Route 5, Pinard/Bremer Street operates in a giant loop between downtown at one end and St. Anselm's College at the other end. This is one of two routes. The next route is

Route 6, which doesn't do quite the same thing but does almost the same thing. This one operates clockwise and Route 6 you will see in a minute operates counter clockwise. Ridership on this route is very low, especially in the Southern portion. On the map on the right where it shows line thicknesses, the line thicknesses on the whole Southern part of this route are so low you can't really even see them. There is really hardly anybody riding the Southern portion of that route. So overall this route is performing pretty poorly. Poor performance is likely due to low demand in the service area, especially the Southern part of it. The loop configuration is very inconvenient and as a general rule of transit you try to avoid loops. Nobody really likes loops. If you go outbound and you are going 2/3 of the way along the route you only go 2/3 of the way on the route. With a loop you have to do...a full roundtrip requires you to go the full roundtrip which results in a much longer trip than you would have to take with a non loop route. The route also duplicates the service provided by Route 6. So potential changes here really are to reconfigure Route 5 and then Route 6 into line-haul routes that provide simpler and more direct service, to get rid of the loop configuration and run the routes out and back. On Route 5 the ridership in this area is low enough so we could replace it with flex-route service where if you live in that area you could get curbside service that would take you directly to the downtown where you could connect to other routes. Another option would be to just discontinue the service due to the very low ridership. Route 6, Gossler/Bremer Street, you can see here from the map that it is very similar to Route 5. This operates in a counter clockwise direction. Ridership on this route is also low but it is much higher or about twice as high as Route 5. As with Route 5, the ridership is very low. You can see those lines are so thin you can really see them again. In this case most of the ridership is between downtown and Main Street and McGregor Street. Not much of it is farther out to the West. A lot of the people are coming from directly on the West Side of the river to and from downtown. Our overall assessment is that although it performs better than Route 5 it still doesn't do that well and the

poor performance is likely due to the same factor, which is low demand in the service area, inconvenient loop configuration, and duplication of services with Route 5. Potential changes are really the same. Reconfigure the routes into line-haul or replace them with flex service. With this one there is also the opportunity to extend service West along Mast Road. Mast Road about a ¼ of a mile up from where the route ends or the Western most section of the route, there is a Shaws and Hannaford supermarket and service to that would probably be attractive to many of the residents there. Now we are getting to some of the better performing routes. As I did all of these routes it is kind of unfortunate that I just started 1, 2, 3 and 4 and coincidentally the poorer performing routes seem to be the lower numbered ones and the better performing routes are the higher numbered routes. If you are thinking it doesn't look very good it does get better. Route 7, Veteran's Hospital connects downtown with Veteran's Hospital and the Dartmouth Hitchcock Clinic. As you can see, this route kind of operates as a giant loop and also goes up to Dartmouth Hitchcock Clinic. The ridership is near the middle of the MTA system, which is about 155 riders on weekdays and 61 on Saturdays. Most of the ridership is to the hospitals and along Mammoth Road. Overall this is an important route. It serves two important destinations, which are the Veteran's Hospital and the Dartmouth Hitchcock Clinic. This route like many others is circuitous but there is not really a lot of...93 creates a barrier that you can't get around so we have to kind of live with that. The different inbound and outbound alignments are confusing and they do make service inconvenient so what we would like to do with this route is operate service along a single alignment. It may be advisable to split this route in two. One that serves the Veteran's Hospital and one that serves Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center. If we did that it may also be possible to serve one of the routes to Hannaford on the DW Highway. Route 8 is South Willow Street, which operates between downtown and the Mall of NH and it is one of the better routes in the system. It has the third highest ridership. It has 218 riders a day. Ridership is strong in most areas along the route and you can

see that on the map to the right where those lines are pretty thick except in a couple of small places. Most of the trips on this route are somewhat surprisingly for work trips, which a lot of times at the mall you think people are going shopping. This kind of indicates that many people going to the Mall of NH and Wal-Mart are employees of those stores as opposed to shoppers. You have 18% that are shopping and 59% that are workers. Another really kind of striking thing about this is that the outbound ridership is much higher than the inbound ridership and that is especially true in the late afternoon. What that indicates is that we have many riders who are taking the bus to go to work and then they are getting home some other way. The route shuts down at 6 PM and the stores and the workers are there until about 10 PM. So it indicates that if the bus did operate later that the people...you would have to assume the people that take the bus to work in the afternoon would also take it home and there is a demand for later service. I think I got a little bit ahead of myself but what this slide says is overall the route does perform well and I just talked about the higher outbound and inbound ridership needs. Here the route is pretty much operating all along the same lines. In and out of downtown it is operating along two different alignments and that is inconvenient. There are some reliability problems with this route and we need to add some layover time at the Mall of New Hampshire. The route is getting delayed and you need to add some more time to the schedules to prevent delays on the subsequent trips. Potential improvements are to provide evening service as I mentioned a minute ago and operate along the same alignment to and from downtown. There are some new retail establishments like Sam's Club and Hannaford on John E. Devine Drive. It may be worthwhile to route service through there to serve those areas. This is a route where we think that more frequent service...the route operates every 60 minutes now, but more frequent service could make this much more attractive. For example, every 30 minutes. Another way to get 30 minute service is that there is the Route 12 South Beech Street route that offers service between downtown and the Mall of NH. Between

those two points we could alternate those two routes. Both of them operate at 60 minutes. You could have a departure from both ends every 30 minutes. Route 9 Daniel Webster Highway operates between downtown and Southern NH University. As you can see on the map it also...most of it also operates as a loop except for the stream north and south. Ridership on this route is about 163 riders per day. The highest ridership is between downtown and Southern NH University so it is not picking up a lot in between. It is mostly students riding back and forth. One of the problems with this route is it is a large area that the MTA is attempting to cover with a single bus. At the beginning I talked about some of the changes that were made when service cuts were made was to maintain service coverage but the service gets inconvenient. In this case it is doing it fairly successfully but the loop operation is still inconvenient and those loop segments are not utilized. It may be that it is important to run between downtown and Southern NH University but maybe it would be better to just pick a single alignment that is operates back and forth on. This is another route where it may be advisable to split it in two. One that operates between downtown and Southern NH University and Colonial Village and another that operates via Northside Plaza. Another option if we split it in two and went to Northside Plaza we could extend that route up 93 to the Target up in Hooksett and that is a way we could serve that area. MTA is getting a lot of requests to serve that area and that would be a fairly efficient way to do it. Route 10 Valley Street is another one of MTA's better routes. This also operates between downtown and the Mall of NH. It is the second highest ridership route. It has 240 passengers per weekday. As you can see from the map on the right the ridership on this is also heavily oriented towards the end of the routes or people riding from downtown to the Mall and the other retail establishments in that area. You can see in the middle of this route this also operates as a loop or I'm sorry the Southern end. Overall the route performs very well. Ridership along the loop portion is low and we are finding that pretty much everywhere. Where there is a loop, the ridership is low. On weekdays...this is more to the South Willow Street

route but on weekdays the ridership on the last trips is high indicating that there is a demand for later service. So people are running out and about to the mall and then we know they have to get back but they are doing it another way. On Saturdays conversely the ridership on the trips before 10 AM is very low, which is really before the mall and the stores are open so it is not really that surprising. That indicates that service on Saturdays should start later. Potential improvements on this route are again to convert the loop section into a line-haul segment that serves a long single alignment, provide later service on weekdays for people who work at the mall and other stores and on Saturdays to start service later and also end service later again for the people who work in the malls. Route 11 goes up Front Street on the other side of the river. It is a long route that operates between downtown and Countryside Village. It operates differently in the morning and the afternoon. Let me just summarize and say it operates in a bunch of different ways that are very confusing and inconvenient. Ridership is below average. It is about 116 riders a day. The overall assessment is the ways that it operates differently is it operates one way past the apartment complexes and different directions at different times of the day and that makes it confusing and inconvenient. What we are also finding is the MTA routes that have the highest ridership serve shopping centers. This route doesn't even though it is pretty close to Colonial Village and the Target up there. So one way we think we can boost ridership on this route is to serve Colonial Village. We think this is a route that also needs to be simplified so that service operates in both directions the same way. In this case it would be via the apartment complexes. There are some new developments – Waterford Village and Countryside retirement village. It may be worthwhile to extend service up there and there may be some opportunities to interline service with another route downtown now so that people could get straight to shopping to say the Mall of NH. If this route always connected with another route, say South Willow, that went down to the Mall of NH. We could give people who lived up here direct service and eliminate the transfers. Route 12 is South Beech Street. It is another

route that operates between downtown and the Mall of NH. Some, but not all of the trips operate via Hesser College. As with all routes it serves the Mall of NH. It is one of the higher ridership routes in this case – the fourth highest ridership route. Ridership is heaviest at the two ends of the routes, again we are finding that with all of the routes that serve the mall and again with this route we are finding that outbound ridership is a lot heavier than inbound ridership. So overall this is a route that performs well. The inconsistent operation via Hesser College is a little inconvenient and confusing. The higher outbound than inbound ridership indicates the service ends too early and the intermediate ridership is also low on this, which indicates that some alignment changes in the middle of the route may be warranted. So potential improvements on this are to operate all service via Hesser College, provide evening service and revise the alignment in the middle of the route, which is between Queen City Avenue and South Willow Street. The last route, Route 13, which is Bedford Mall/CCT, operates down River Street on the other side of the river. It operates between downtown and the Bedford Mall. As with many routes different trips do different things at different times of the day. In that middle section routes are operating in different directions at different parts of the day. Two trips end at CCT and this is the highest ridership route in the system. There are 250 passengers during a weekday and you can see the ridership on Saturdays is almost as high, which is unusual in any system. So overall this route performs very well. It gets the highest ridership. Ridership is very strong along the North end of the route. It is also strong along the Southern end. However, it is overly complex with the four variations, two of which are one-way. So the potential improvements are to operate service along a single alignment. Wal-Mart is served in one direction. That is one of the bigger stops and we think that should be served in both directions. There is a deviation at Bedford Commons that is getting virtually no ridership so we think that should be eliminated and eliminate service down to CCT, which recently closed. There are also some new retail stores going up further South on Route 3, the biggest of which is a Target. It looks

like that route should be extended down to serve those new stores. So we have gotten through all 13 routes and my voice is dying but just to summarize I think we have presented a lot of information to you pretty quickly but really the big message here is that there are a lot of things that could be done to make service a lot better. As I stated at the beginning of the presentation, changes include a single downtown Manchester hub, make service more direct and you heard that for almost every route I talked about. Make service simpler, which includes minimizing route deviations and to just expand the service and start running some night service especially to serve jobs that are at all of the stores here now. Also to implement new types of service such as flex route service and extend service to some of the new retail developments, especially south along River Road and Colonial Village just north of 93. So we think by doing that and making these changes you can really focus your resources on where they will be most effective and make service a lot better for existing riders, reverse the ridership decline that has been underway and start attracting new riders to the system.

Alderman Roy stated I will have further follow-up questions later on but just a clarification. On the Front Street route you mentioned Target and Colonial Village and it seemed like you were talking about the Target between Hooksett and the BJ's and the Kohl's that is there now. Colonial Village is in the Southern part of Ward 1. I don't get the correlation. Is there another Colonial Village that I am not aware of?

Mr. Slater stated that would be Hooksett Crossing I was talking about. Colonial Village is actually one of the bigger ridership stops on a different route.

Alderman Roy responded that is on the River Road route, which runs through my ward that I am very happy we have and I do see that it gets used. That is why I

wanted to clarify...I was hoping you were talking about Washington Park or Hooksett Crossing or different multi-family.

Mr. Slater replied yes that is my error.

Alderman Shea stated the question that I have is my thoughts run along the line of what routes should be disconnected or combined with existing routes and how would such action impact people who now depend on the bus service. That is really what I feel is so significant. In other words, how can you make it plausible for people to still ride the bus but yet reduce the bus service to certain areas where you indicated there are a very limited number of people using these services? Now maybe you hit upon that when you began your discussion. Is that something that you people are contemplating?

Mr. Slater responded I think one of the decisions that all of you need to make and MTA needs to make is there is an area, if you remember the routes 5 and 6 between downtown and St. Anselm's College there are only a couple of people who are riding the bus over there and you are running buses over there two different routes about 12 trips a day and almost nobody is riding it. A decision needs to be made on whether you should continue to run the bus over there for only a couple of people or should you run it somewhere else where you can serve far more people. I think from the transportation planning aspect of it you are going to run more cost effective and more efficient service if you put the buses where the people are. I think what you have to decide and those are policy decisions, are do we want to make service available to every resident in the City even though in some areas you know that very few will use them. I think it is more of a policy question than anything else.

Alderman Shea stated but one of the other concerns, too, is that I believe when we were discussing this Dave Smith indicated last week that they want to have some sort of a meeting point downtown for those people so the more complex you make the bus situation the more difficult it is to arrive at a point where certain buses will come to make transfers possible for people. That is another problem. In other words, the more buses you have the more difficult it is to get them all coordinated.

Mr. Slater responded our goal here is that the buses now, almost every route operates every 60 minutes. Each route is leaving every 60 minutes but one may leave at 15 past the hour and the other may leave at 40 past the hour. If you are transferring between those now you have to wait sometimes 25 minutes and you may have to go from one of the locations to the other. If we have a single location where we can keep the buses running every 60 minutes we can have what is called pulsing and they would come together on the hour and leave at say 10 past the hour so that the transfers are in one location and the buses are all timed and you can transfer easily from any route to any other route. That is kind of a huge benefit to the downtown location is where you can make it much more convenient for people to transfer than it is now.

Alderman Shea stated one other point is if there were some way for people to have some kind of communication person downtown. By that you mentioned terminal and the thought struck me would it be possible for people not to have to look or call up the management but to have someone downtown who serves as an agent for these people to go to. I think that would improve the communication between riders and the MTA in terms of getting questions answered or finding a bus schedule or something of that sort. That is another thought I had.

Mr. Slater responded I think that would help and I think there is the Visitor's

Center there at Veteran's Park and if that person at the Visitor's Center could provide bus information that would be a great benefit.

Alderman Shea stated you see downtown when people come into the City they have someone who gives them information about the City about where you can go and where you can eat and where you can do other things for entertainment but if there was something downtown that people would go to and I don't know how to get across that concept but a building or a place so that people could go downtown and have some identification. I don't know about the cost of that or how that would be implemented but that is something that I think would be helpful.

Alderman O'Neil stated I was one of the those kids growing up in a one car family in Manchester and we took the Lake Avenue bus very regularly and if that one wasn't available there was the Derryfield or the Page Street to get us to within a few blocks of the same neighborhood. It was a very informative presentation. I learned a lot. Does anybody have any idea the last time a route study was done in this City? I know that David Smith talked about revisions in 1994 and 1999 but any idea when a full study was last done?

Mr. Smith stated there was a study done in 1999 but it was not a study that is going to the extent that this one is.

Alderman O'Neil asked is there a national standard or trend on how often a full study should be done for a system.

Mr. Slater answered a thorough review should be done every four or five years. It is necessary really to collect the data and get a good feel for what your patterns of ridership are and what your passengers are thinking and wanting.

Alderman O'Neil stated I don't know what triggered this but I was sitting here thinking about...one of you said something about when Opticom was first installed in the City of Manchester at various intersections and I remember when there was a presentation by I think 3M who was the manufacturer of it that it could be used for bus service. Now we only use it for fire service currently. Is there any experience with using Opticom or similar technology to move buses along say South Willow Street for example?

Mr. Smith asked are you talking about traffic signal preemption.

Alderman O'Neil answered correct.

Mr. Smith stated that is used in some very large cities like New York, Los Angeles and Chicago where essentially the bus operator can do the same thing as a fire engine does and actually hold the green light longer so that the bus can get through. Sometimes that is automatic and sometimes it is triggered by the driver. Typically that is a big city thing and it is not really an effective thing in a small city in terms of making much difference.

Alderman O'Neil stated I do see buses idling an awful lot in downtown Manchester because the signals are coordinated so it was just a thought and I remember that was an option that could be done with the product. Geoff you talked about 1,900 passengers per weekday is the average. Any idea what a city our size...how many riders should we be averaging and how many routes there should be? I am sure there are a lot of factors that go into that.

Mr. Slater responded there are a lot of factors. It is not a simple question. Your ridership here is on the low side though. I can't tell you what based on...without

doing more work it is a hard question to answer but I can tell you that you would expect ridership to be higher than it is here.

Alderman O'Neil stated you touched on some of the night time activity with the route coming from Southern NH University but in general with a lot more restaurants downtown and the Palace Theatre, the Verizon Arena and the ballpark I didn't hear a lot of discussion about that. You are talking about expanding nighttime service for retail heading out to Bedford and to the Mall of NH but what about general nighttime routes?

Mr. Slater responded this is kind of a smaller city thing but smaller cities don't tend to get a lot of transit ridership for people going out to restaurants and to events. A lot of the ridership is based on what in the transit industry is called transit dependence. Those are the people who don't have a car or only have one car and lower income people. They do tend to serve employees or retail stores, which tend to have many lower wage jobs. Many shopping trips among the elderly and lower income people and medical appointments and that sort of thing and that is really where the core ridership is. I think if we do some of these things like provide evening service to the mall that those have service to downtown also so we would pick up some riders but I don't think that is a strong market to be aiming a lot of efforts at.

Alderman O'Neil asked Mr. Smith do you want to add something to that.

Mr. Smith answered I just want to add that the MTA has applied for a congestion mitigation and air quality grant. This is a funding source that is really a supplemental funding source. It is not our typical funding stream but it is federal money that is available to mitigate air pollution through various means. That can involve transit or street improvements or signalization and that kind of thing. We

did make an application last spring for the grant. It is about a two-year approval process and we are in the middle of that cycle right now. We sought money to do three things with the downtown circulator. The first was to establish a parking shuttle that would serve basically North and South on Elm Street and through the Millyard that would provide easy access for parking in the morning and afternoon on weekdays between those areas. Secondly, part of that project is a lunch time shuttle between those two areas where service would be provided between the Millyard and the downtown at lunch time for better circulation without requiring a person in the Millyard to get in their car and drive downtown or vice versa. Thirdly part of that is I guess what we call the entertainment shuttle. It would operate three or four nights weekly on a double loop. One loop through the Millyard and southbound on Elm Street and one loop northbound on Elm Street and southbound on Chestnut serving circulation in the main downtown area for people going to restaurants or entertainment.

Alderman O'Neil stated I have one final question. You specifically mentioned on Route 7 the importance of Route 7 to the VA Hospital and the Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Clinic. I didn't see anything in your presentation or an emphasis on the Elliot Hospital or CMC. Is there anything that can be done there to improve...I think it was great that you pointed that out on Route 7 and I am just trying to see how it affects the Elliot Hospital route or CMC in West Manchester.

Mr. Slater stated the Elliot Hospital is one of the bigger stops on Route 4. We would certainly continue to serve that. I think it is the second biggest stop after East Side Plaza so I think that is important to serve. A lot of the changes to Route 4 were to try to get rid of the different inbound and outbound alignment and run it more directly between downtown and Elliot Hospital. That should make it easier for people to get to and from the Elliot Hospital.

Alderman O'Neil asked what about CMC over on McGregor Street and Main Street.

Mr. Slater answered surprisingly the ridership there isn't as high but there is good service over there. A lot of the routes that do go to the other side of the river do pass there and just because of its location the routes would continue to do that no matter what changes we made. Of the different hospitals I don't know why but that does have a lower ridership than the other ones.

Alderman Forest stated I have a couple of things. One, Route 11 you were talking about Countryside Retirement Village. Would that be Hillcrest Terrace? Are you talking about the development there, Countryside Village, or are you talking about Hillcrest Terrace?

Mr. Slater responded it is the retirement village that is at the end of the road.

Alderman Forest replied then it would be Hillcrest Terrace and that is along the lines of what I spoke to Dave about earlier. That is one really narrow road and if you go in there you are backing up. There is nowhere to turn around in there so that would be a little difficult to go right to the retirement community. It is not a dead end but it does dead end at parking lots and I don't know how you are going to get a bus turned around in there. I know we had talked about Waterford Place and all of that.

Mr. Smith stated along Country Club Drive it is...when you get to Hillcrest Terrace it is too narrow and of course they don't want us turning every bus around there. One of the things that will be important for us in the near future will be to deal effectively as that area develops with the developers so that we do have opportunities to serve those areas. I would remark that one of those relatively new

developments is unable to be served because a vehicle cannot turn around and we want to be able to work with those developers so that we may be able to serve their residents.

Alderman Forest stated there is a newer development that is going to be built shortly and again I was telling you that the Fire Department sort of had their concerns about the width of the street and they have agreed to widen the streets there in order to get a firetruck around so you could probably get your bus in but the old developments are very narrow. The other thing in your presentation that I like are the stops at the grocery stores and Alderman Long will appreciate that because a few of the grocery stores downtown got closed down for development and the elderly that live downtown I see walking across the bridge to my side of the river because Vista Food is there but it is nice to hear that you are going to be stopping at Shaws and Hannaford. One more question and this has been a concern in prior years but the elderly high-rises. We have a brand-new senior center. We have a bus stop in front of the senior center but the buses don't stop at the elderly apartments. Again, they are maybe four or five blocks away. Was there any consideration of maybe going by the elderly high-rises? I know there is a bus stop at the Pariseau but the two I am concerned with are the East Side ones. The bus doesn't even go down Chestnut Street that way. That may be a consideration to get the elderly from where they are to the senior center or to the shopping centers.

Mr. Smith stated most of the high-rises are well served by the transit service and definitely that was one of the former priorities for aligning service. The service that was not mentioned by Geoff in his review of the routes was our shopper shuttle service that we do provide throughout the senior high-rises and not just the Manchester Housing Authority sites but also large apartment complexes where a large number of seniors live. We have regular route service that is supported by Hannaford, Stop and Shop and Vista on the West Side that regularly serves those

stores and serves all of those high-rises in sequence. Basically the bus will do all of the West Side sites, go to the store and drop those folks off then go to the East Side sites and pick those folks up again.

Alderman Forest stated the ones I am talking about are the O'Malley and the Kalivas. Again, they may have shuttle service to the stores but if they want to go to the mall or they want to go to the senior center they really have to walk down to the Verizon Arena to get a bus and some of those people can't walk that far.

Mr. Smith responded the Willow Street route serves those locations and that is one of the reasons that we want to focus on a convenient transfer. It is impossible to make every route go everywhere but if we can afford convenient transfer between the routes then we avoid affecting a person negatively in terms of the time that they must wait and I think that is particularly important for the Aldermen.

Alderman DeVries stated if I understood the presentation correctly you hope to increase your ridership by eliminating some of the very convoluted loops that are in the system as it exists today. There may be individuals who depend on the bus line within those loops and if I understood you they could be serviced through your flex routes with some other...and I just didn't understand the logistics of how that might happen.

Mr. Smith responded that is an idea that Geoff brought to us and I will let him explain that a little more.

Mr. Slater stated it is a new type of service that the Providence area is using. It actually started in Fort Worth where you define a service area that is about a five or six square mile area and you say within that area we will pick you up at the curb in front of your house or in front of your job and then we won't take you anywhere.

We will take you to a specific location and in Manchester that location would likely be the downtown hub. So we will take you to downtown and you can connect with all of the other routes and get to...if you want to go to the Mall of NH you get on one of the routes that goes down there and if you want to go down to Macy's you get on Route 13. So that is a way that you can actually make service more convenient for people. It only works in areas where there are low volumes of passengers because you can easily overload that type of service. So in places like the southern end of Routes 5 and 6 where the ridership is very low it could be that instead of having two buses go through there once an hour we could have a van go through there and pick people up once an hour or if the demand is really low every two hours so in some ways people would get better service. If it is once an hour it would be more convenient. So there are different ways you can provide that service and the flex route service is one of those ways. So in most cases we are always looking at ways to continue to serve them but in some cases where the ridership is very low, for example Saturdays at the airport where there are only 21 riders I think you should ask yourself is it worth it to run a bus all day on Saturday for 21 people. So we are trying to find a balance between providing as much service as we can with making sure that the service we provide is effective.

Alderman DeVries asked and you led perfectly into my second question, which was going to address the bus size because if there is a comment that I have heard it is from individuals that do note that frequently we do have buses with not too many individuals riding them at any given time. If I understand what you are saying by having more direct routes the ridership will increase so that the buses will be fuller on those main routes by utilizing smaller vehicles, possibly vans or smaller buses?

Mr. Smith responded yes. As you know through the CIP we are in the process of replacing buses and in 2004 received two 35' buses. Those were buses that were spec'd by the state and we piggybacked on that order and were able to get those 35' buses based on their order rather than having to go through the bid process. We recently with 2005-2006 CIP grants of three buses each have ordered six 30' buses and those will replace the 1991 buses and some of those school bus looking type things or the 1996 buses. You are right. Geoff is talking about flex service in some areas and those services might better be provided with a van.

Alderman Duval stated just out of curiosity what was the duration of the survey. I didn't catch that. How many months or weeks?

Mr. Slater responded over about three week's time and we had somebody ride every route and it was over three weeks so we did every trip on every route over a three-week period.

Alderman Duval stated Alderman Long was asking what time during the year and I was going to ask that as well.

Mr. Slater responded it was done at the end of October/beginning of November.

Alderman Duval stated in follow-up to what Alderman DeVries was asking with respect to the size of the buses when a Manchester resident asks me and it has been asked recently as a matter of fact why we have such large buses in the fleet when there appears to be more often than not under utilization...I understand what you are saying about just a few buses that are being replaced with smaller ones but what would the answer be from an efficiency perspective and the maneuverability of a bus in our tight often times congested City streets by our bus drivers. What is the answer and where are we headed?

Mr. Smith responded probably 96% or 98% of the City buses sold in the country are 40' long. We don't have any 40' buses. We do have four 35' buses purchased between 1998 and 2004. As I said in the next part of our fleet replacement we will be replacing six 30' buses out of a total of sixteen buses. So at the end of this year we will have 10 that are relatively new. We have plans to replace the remaining buses at two per year. All of the remaining buses have exceeded their estimated useful lives by a significant margin.

Alderman Duval asked is the size of the bus dictated by the number of passengers or is it because the City utilizes the buses for other means of transportation for special events.

Mr. Smith answered the buses are used exclusively for route service. Because we receive federal funds to support the cost of the buses we are prohibited by law from engaging in charter service so they are used exclusively for the regular route service.

Alderman Duval stated I noticed that the study noted 1,900 passengers per weekday. Is that a constant number or has that been in decline because from the numbers we were looking at in your presentation I think the numbers have been in decline and I know you are trying to address that with this study but has it been a steady decline over the past decade?

Mr. Smith responded no it hasn't. In fact, it is on the upswing. In the last three or four months it has increased at the rate of between 10 and 20% a month. That may largely be due to the cost of fuel and the economy. Geoff indicated that the survey was done in October/November and typically when you do these brief period counts you want to pick the period of the year when the most people are riding so

that you don't miss anybody that may be an occasional rider. So the 1,900 number reflects a high daily average if you look at the yearly number. It would be typically higher than you see in the summer or at other times of the year. During the holiday season we have a spike in ridership with people going shopping. Those aren't good periods to survey because it is not normal but it is a little bit higher. The ridership over the course of time has declined with the cuts in service and it has been only recently that we have seen a significant increase that is more than double digit in the 10% to 20% range in the last few months.

Alderman Roy stated it is very nice to give us an update in regards to the routes and some of the deficiencies. My question is have any of the costs been analyzed if we did enact all of the recommendations? Where would that put us? If that hasn't been done yet is it going to be done and when can we expect to see those results?

Mr. Slater responded the next part of our study and I talked about a number of potential improvements and it is actually to define specifically how we would implement those improvements. You know the bus goes right on Smith Street and left on Jones Street, etc. Once we do that then we will cost it out. We will look at the what the impacts on operating costs would be and what the impacts on capital costs would be. For example, if you need to buy new buses. We will also project what the ridership impacts would be so that is the next part. I think the emphasis on what we are doing is to try to use existing resources more effectively. In most cases where I have done this we have been able to stay pretty much within the existing budgets. The next part of this is to look at how you expand service where the growth areas are. I think the emphasis is to try and use the existing resources more effectively – both the costs and the ridership impacts is what we will do next.

Alderman Roy stated I, for one, would definitely look to increase the ridership. I know some of the routes that go down through Bedford it would be nice to add the Targets and other retail establishments so people can go downtown and shop without having major headaches to get to and from their homes as well as servicing the hospitals and making those the most direct routes as possible. Thank you for your work and I look forward to seeing how the budget comes out.

Alderman Lopez stated most of my questions have been answered but on the recommendations I hope you will come forward with some policies that we want to make in the City for efficiency and safety and if there is going to be a savings we will address that when that comes. We had previous conversations and I know there are some restrictions on the MTA but are you going to look at ways...I know you are going to take the buses out to the employers where people are working up in the Industrial Park and stuff but have you calculated or would you calculate in the price if a company wanted to subsidize their employees and buy whatever discount they have...you know what I mean? I have had this conversation before with Sonya Parer because there are a lot of people that work out there and if the company could subsidize whatever the price of the ticket is and give a discount to their employee for riding the bus I think that would increase ridership along that line because a lot of them have to walk. Have you talked about that or is that going to be in your report?

Mr. Smith stated we are happy to work with any business that wants to support their employees transit use. There are tax incentives federally for employers to subsidize transit passes and that is something that we have talked to some employers about. On thing that we recently have initiated is working closely with the universities. This semester at the NH Community Technical College on Front Street we are engaging in our first experiment with them where they are paying us a flat fee and every student rides free. We also have just recently talked in the last

two weeks with UNH-Manchester about the same idea. The idea is over time working with the university to encourage ridership and to encourage them to resolve some of their parking difficulties to encourage students to ride by supporting the cost and ultimately providing revenue to us equivalent to the fare that we would otherwise get.

Alderman Lopez stated my other question is and there is probably not a location but is there a park and ride where too many cars are coming in to the City of Manchester can park. Is that something that would be explored to bring people in?

Mr. Smith responded park and ride has not been explored. I don't think it is something for the short-term. With the I-93 expansion there is going to be significant expansion of the park and ride facilities at Exits 5, 4 and 3, including bus service north and south on I-93. Along with that and that is supported both by federal funds and NHDOT funds, along with that is the idea that there may be some demand for Manchester residents to access bus service that goes to that park and ride so we have been watching the development of those park and rides closely because it may be something that in conjunction with our airport service we should really consider extending farther to Exit 5 to provide a connection to that bus service that will be going to Boston.

Alderman Lopez stated since you have been here David I would say that it is a tremendous job the MTA is doing number one and secondly no matter what we do and no matter what you come up with you are not going to please everybody. I think it is efficiency that we are looking for and the service and the cost aspect of it.

Alderman Long stated with respect to the...I heard you say that you invited the social service agencies here tonight. With respect to your COA what kind of input

and...I would hope that it would be a large input. I think these social service agencies would know the needs of their clients or the people that need these services.

Mr. White responded a big part of the scope of our overall Regional Transit Feasibility Study is going to be to develop a database of information on all of the transportation services that the various social service agencies provide now and make sure that information is available to as many people as possible. We think that is important as a means of addressing the existing transportation problems that we have in the City right now. We think that the facilities that the social service agencies provide is part of the solution to the problem as well as the fixed route services themselves.

Alderman Shea stated according to your work scope you mentioned that 2/3 of your study has been completed and according to the purpose obviously you want to present potential improvement options. May I ask when you plan on completing your study and when you plan to come back if you have to come back to this Board to finalize your report?

Mr. Slater stated we will probably have completed defining what the improvement alternatives are and analyzing them in about a month to a month and a half. So in terms of coming back here I think I will let David answer that.

Mr. Smith stated after conclusion of the study the results will be presented to the MTA Board first for their review and approval and then passed along. I anticipate that before early summer or during the early summer there will be further information for you.

Alderman Shea asked doesn't the budget have some impact on the MTA – how much we do give to them. I am not sure whether that would be before or after the Mayor submits his budget.

Mayor Guinta answered I do have the budget request from MTA. How much of that request is federal funds?

Mr. Smith stated the federal funding amount for the coming fiscal year I believe is about \$1.4 million or \$1.5 million for operating and pardon me for being fuzzy. The request for the City share is about \$1.2 million.

Mayor Guinta asked in addition to the \$1.5 million.

Mr. Smith answered yes.

Alderman Shea stated what I was trying to do was get the study completed so as to give all parties involved a better perspective as far as what the needs might be and obviously what the wants might be too so there would be a better idea from everyone's point of view here.

Alderman Smith stated I have several questions if you don't mind. You have 13 routes. How many buses do we have available in case of breakdown?

Mr. Smith responded we have 16 transit buses as well as a number of the vans that were purchased in 2000 were purchased as mid-sized vans. Those are the vans that serve the ADA paratransit service that we call Step Saver. In the event that we need to use one of those vans on a regular route we can. It has signs just like a normal bus and enough seats. The fleet has been shrinking in the last couple of months. While we have 16 buses two of those buses are currently inoperable and

we are not going to repair them. It is not worth investing the \$10,000 or \$15,000 in a bus that is going to be replaced in three or four months so we have been operating very thin but operating successfully.

Alderman Smith asked what is the average age of your fleet.

Mr. Smith answered off hand I don't know the average age. We have four 1991 30' buses and three of those are currently inoperable. We have eight 1996 Thomas Vista 30' buses and these are the buses that look like school buses. They are seven year buses so they have exceeded their estimated useful lives and are operating successfully but they are weak. We have newer larger buses – a 1998 and 2001 and then two 2004 heavy duty buses.

Alderman Smith asked what is...are most of these ADA accessible.

Mr. Smith answered all of our buses are lift equipped. Almost all of them also kneel at the front door. The school bus types don't. Of course that service is supplemented by the AA service, which does provide door to door service for those people that can't use the accessible bus.

Alderman Smith stated Route 13 happens to be all through my ward and I was wondering if you could review the route. You say the average route takes 60 minutes? Is there any consideration of having a bus run every 30 minutes since it is so crucial? The average ridership is the highest in the City and you are going to malls and businesses. Is that being given any consideration when you are reducing other routes?

Mr. Slater responded we can certainly look at that and as I said we are going to be estimating what the costs are of the ridership so we will look at that.

Alderman Smith stated I have one last question. We are not jeopardizing any consumers or riders with our fleet correct? I think it is relatively old. I don't know what the average mileage is on your buses but it sounds like they have exceeded their warranties, most of the buses.

Mr. Smith responded the buses are very well maintained and have been maintained. The 1991 buses were our stalwarts through all of those years right up until this past year when of course we had anticipated replacing them. We hope the last one will make it until June. The heavy duty buses are of course very safe. Bus travel is probably the most safe of any form of travel. They don't operate at high speeds and they are very heavily constructed. The public need to have no worry in that sense but they are going to be replaced soon.

Alderman Shea stated I know that yesterday I went through the area with David and a couple of others and I can assure you that the mechanics are very hard workers there. I know that one of the mechanics, the senior mechanic, was working on a bus yesterday and he is one of the more experienced so you can rest assured that all of the buses are in very good shape.

Alderman DeVries stated hopefully this is the last question. I noticed within the work scope that it doesn't really address there a regional look at a transit system and since we already have one route that extends into Bedford and I would have to imagine that there could be in the future some wish to collaborate with Hooksett on some of their housing complexes or the greater density in their shopping. Is there going to be a point in time that is appropriate for us to start looking regionally, not only for savings in funding and underwriting some of the costs but also to gain better utilization?

Mr. Slater responded the answer to that question is yes. As a matter of fact we are presently holding discussions with some of the neighboring towns to determine if it would be possible for us to extend the existing routes into some of the neighboring towns in the Southern NH Planning Commission region and under what circumstance might we be able to form a relationship with those towns in order to provide improved regionalized transit service.

Alderman Pinard asked regarding Industrial Park Drive and Candia Road has there been a study of time in and time out for many of the companies around there. At about 3 PM I think Industrial Park Drive is lined up from Candia Road almost to Island Pond Road and Cohas Avenue. That means there are an awful lot of people who work there and maybe some kind of marketing device in that area might increase the passenger because it is getting to be out of control.

Mr. Smith responded I agree. Industrial Park Drive is served only in one direction and intermittently and that is one thing that Geoff mentioned that needs to be looked at to be provided frequently so that there is regular service on Industrial Park Drive either from the Hanover route or the Lake Avenue route. I think that is one of our big opportunities. Both the Industrial Park area where there is so much light industry and a heavy concentration of employment that draws a lot of workers from the center city. It is a good opportunity for us and something that is an important goal I think of this study is to provide regular service to that area.

Alderman Pinard asked do you have any idea when you can start this and get the ball rolling before fall comes. I know I live right in that area and I see everything. There are a lot of people who take the bus, especially at Kalwall Products.

Mr. Smith stated thank you all for being very attentive and asking great questions tonight.

Alderman O'Neil stated it looks like David Preece, the Executive Director of Southern NH Planning Commission wants to make a comment.

David Preece stated again if you would like to have a full copy of the report you can go to our website at www.snhpc.org. If you have trouble downloading and printing the document I will be glad to make a copy and send it out to you but it is important that we have your comments and input as to what you heard tonight because we want to have recommendations that make sense dollars and cents wise, that is cost efficient, effective and serves the people of Manchester and the surrounding areas. That is why we are here tonight. To get your input and to get the input from all of you – MTA and all of the other service providers. That is what I would like to encourage you to do for the next couple of weeks is to download the report, read it and spend some time and give us your thoughts on it. We will send your comments and input to Geoff so that he can have the entire picture when he makes his recommendations. Thank you very much.

This being a special meeting of the Board, no further business can be presented and on motion of Alderman Pinard, duly seconded by Alderman Long it was voted to adjourn.

A True Record. Attest.

City Clerk